

Message Text

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ACTION SS-30

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----- 116599
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9792

S E C R E T BANGKOK 0871
EXDIS
E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MASS, MARR, TH
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S CALL ON MINISTER OF DEFENSE DAWEE (US FORCES
AND MAP)

REF: BANGKOK 782 BANGKOK 872 BANGKOK 873

1. SUMMARY: AMBASSADOR'S CONVERSATIONS WITH DAWEE BEING REPORTED
IN FOUR SEPARATE TELEGRAMS. AMBASSADOR TOLD DAWEE THAT US GOVERN-
MENT WANTS VERY MUCH TO KEEP US FORCES IN THAILAND AT PRESENT LEVEL
THRU THE VIETNAMESE DRY SEASON. DAWEE IMPLIED THAT HE HAD NO
OBJECTION IN PRINCIPLE, BUT THAT THAI SOCIETY WILL HAVE TO EARN
MORE MONEY FROM US FORCES IN THAILAND. DAWEE USED AMBASSADOR'S
CALL TO MAKE STRONG PLEA FOR FIRST-CLASS MODERN MILITARY EQUIPMENT
FOR THAILAND. DAWEE ALSO STRESSED THAT "UTTER FRANKNESS" MUST
CHARACTERIZE AMERICAN-THAI RELATIONS. END SUMMARY.

2. DURING CALL JANUARY 14, AMBASSADOR TOLD DAWEE THAT THE US GOVERN-
MENT WANTS TO KEEP ITS MILITARY FORCES IN THAILAND AT APPROXIMATELY
THE CURRENT LEVEL THROUGH THE VIETNAMESE DRY SEASON. IF US
AIR FORCE IN THAILAND IS SUCCESSFUL IN DETERRING NORTH VIETNAMESE
AGRESSION THROUGH THE DRY SEASON THE UNITED STATES THINKS THE NORTH
MIGHT BECOME ACCUSTOMED TO PEACE IN INDOCHINA. ONCE THE DRY SEASON
IS PASSED, THE AMBASSADOR NOTED A FURTHER GRADUAL REDUCTION IN US
FORCES CAN BE WORKED OUT THROUGH JOINT THAI-US CONSULTATIONS.

3. DAWEE SAID THAT HE HAD ALWAYS SUPPORTED THE PRESENCE OF US
FORCES IN THAILAND DURING INTERNAL RTG DISCUSSIONS. DAWEE ALSO
NOTED THAT HE HAD NEVER ASKED AMERICAN FORCES TO OPERATE IN THAILAND
AGAINST INSURGENTS AND THEREFORE "TO KILL THAI PEOPLE". HOWEVER,
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DAWEE SAID HE WAS ALWAYS ASKED THE QUESTION WHY US FORCES ARE
ALLOWED TO HAVE THEIR OWN SUPPORT FACILITIES, WHY THEIR PRESENCE
HERE BENEFITS THAILAND SO LITTLE. DAWEE CONTINUED: "WE SHOULD HAVE
MORE THAIS WORKING FOR US FORCES, WE THAIS MUST GET MORE BENEFIT

FROM YOUR PRESENCE HERE. I HAVE TALKED TO KRIANGSAK ABOUT THIS PROBLEM. THAI WAR VETERANS COULD TAKE OVER SOME SUPPORT OPERATIONS THAT ARE NOW PERFORMED BY US FIRMS LIKE AM.PAC."

4. AMBASSADOR KINTNER SAID HE HOPED THE US COULD MAKE SOME CHANGES ALONG THE LINES SUGGESTED BY DAWEE. HE TOLD DAWEE THAT THE UNITED STATES RECOGNIZES THE SITUATION IN THAILAND IS CHANGING AND THAT THE US-THAI RELATIONSHIP MUST KEEP PACE WITH THESE CHANGES.

5. TURNING TO THE MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (MAP), AMBASSADOR KINTNER REMARKED THAT ALTHOUGH PROGRAM LEVELS WERE NOT YET FIRM, OUTLOOK FOR A GENEROUS PROGRAM WAS MUCH BETTER THAN A MONTH AGO. THE AMBASSADOR ALSO NOTED EFFORTS TO TRANSFER EXCESS EQUIPMENT TO THAILAND OUTSIDE THE MAP SUCH AS A US DESTROYER ESCORT, WHICH WOULD SOON GO TO THE NAVY, AND SEVERAL F-5A FIGHTERS SLATED FOR THE AIR FORCE.

6. DAWEE INTERRUPTED AT THIS POINT TO SAY THAT VIETNAM GOT F-5ES WHILE, DESPITE A LONG FRIENDSHIP, THAILAND GOT INFERIOR F-5A FIGHTERS. WE SHOULD GET THE BEST EQUIPMENT YOU HAVE, SAID DAWEE, "NOT SECOND BEST."

7. MENTION OF THE MAP, CAUSED DAWEE TO REMEMBER THAI PURCHASE OF A FRIGATE CONSTRUCTED BY YARROW LTD. DAWEE NOTED THAT HE HAD THOUGHT FROM THE BEGINNING THAT THE THAI NAVY HAD NO NEED FOR THIS SHIP. HOWEVER, WHEN THE US MISSION THREATENED A CUT IN MAP IF THE THAI BOUGHT THE VESSEL, DAWEE SAID HE FELT COMPELLED TO COOPERATE WITH SUPPORTERS OF THE PURCHASE TO PRESENT A UNIFIED THAI FRONT AGAINST UNJUSTIFIED FOREIGN INTERFERENCE IN THAI AFFAIRS.

8. JUST BEFORE THE AMBASSADOR'S CALL ENDED, MINISTER OF DEFENSE DAWEE REITERATED HIS REQUEST FOR THE MOST MODERN WEAPONS THE UNITED STATES COULD PROVIDE. DAWEE ALSO STRESSED THAT UTTER FRANKNESS BY BOTH PARTIES MUST CHARACTERIZE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE US AND THAILAND. DAWEE SAID THAT THE RTG UNDERSTOOD THE ROLE OF
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THE US CONGRESS IN APPROPRIATIONS. "IF SOMETHING IS IMPOSSIBLE," SAID DAWEE, "TELL ME FRANKLY AND WE WILL FIND ANOTHER WAY TO ACHIEVE OUR COMMON GOALS." DAWEE ALSO NOTED THAT HIS TENURE AS MINISTER OF DEFENSE WOULD BE MARKED BY A LOW POSTURE FOR THE THAI MILITARY. DAWEE ASSURED THE AMBASSADOR AS WELL THAT NO EFFORT WOULD BE SPARED TO INCULCATE DEMOCRACY AMONG THE THAI ARMED FORCES AND CONVINCE THEM THAT, IN THE LONG RUN, A DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM WOULD USE THEIR TALENTS EFFICIENTLY FOR THAILAND'S DEVELOPMENT.

COMMENT: IT IS TOO EARLY TO TELL WHETHER DAWEE'S ADVOCACY OF DEMOCRACY IS GENUINE OR OPPORTUNISTIC. WE WILL TRY TO FIND OUT IF ANY "DEMOCRATIC" INDOCTRINATION PROGRAM EXISTS OR WILL BE DEVELOPED IN THAI ARMED SERVICES. DAWEE POSSESSES UNDENIABLE CHARM,

APPEARS TO BE NIMBLE ON HIS POLITICAL FEET AND PLACES MUCH STORE
IN HIS AMERICAN CONNECTIONS. IN THE STORM CREATED BY
THE FAKE LETTER, HE HAS BEEN THE MOST HELPFUL THAI OFFICIAL TO
THE US MISSION. I PLAN TO KEEP GOOD LINES OPEN TO HIM AS WELL AS
TO OTHER SECTORS.
KINTNER

NOTE BY OC/T: EXDIX CAPTION ADDED PER S/S-O, MR. NEWLIN.

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